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ABSTRACT

The results of Osgood's Semantic Differential Scale, administered to 81 teachers, revealed that teachers saw themselves as "fair, alert, active, good" and, above all, "clean." The fact that these teachers were inclined to see Mexican American, black, and Caucasian students in much the same light (making only minor discriminations between ethnic groups) is interpreted as evidence of the tendency of teachers to project middle-class values onto their perceptions of students. This perception of children, in a similar pleasant and desirable image, but, significantly, not quite as desirable or pleasant, suggests that the teacher wants and needs the children to become as he or she would like to be, i.e., middle-class. (KG)

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Value Systems of Teachers and Their Perception of Self, and of Mexican American, Negro and Anglo Children

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Value Systems of Teachers and Their Perception of Self, and of Mexican American, Negro and Anglo Children

Osgood's Semantic Differential (Osgood, et. al., 1957) was administered to 81 Teachers at a six-weeks In-Service Training Seminar in Race Relations. Seven different scales were presented to the Teachers. In the first six scales, they were asked to describe how they felt (i. e., perceived) 3rd grade youngsters--both boys and girls--of Anglo American, Mexican American, and Negro descent. The last scale was a Self-Description. In all seven scales, the bi-polar qualities were the usual eleven scales suggested by Osgood:

Slow vs.	Fast
Fair vs.	Unfair
Heavy vs.	Light
Alert vs.	Dull
Cold vs.	Hot
Bad vs.	Good
Large vs.	Small
Strong vs.	Weak
Dirty vs.	Clean
Bright vs.	Slow

It has been decided that no specific hypothesis would be proposed as to the exact plot of the profile(s). What was planned was a general hypothesis regarding the notion that the scores of these individuals who were in the top quarter of the distribution on the Social Desirability score continuum would yield a profile which would describe themselves and the children as being "nicer" in middle-class terms (Gillin). That is, the general hypothesis was that the outer-directed (i. e., high Social Desirability Score) individuals would reply in a more "desirable" direction, and thus describe the child-

dren and themselves as individuals who were more "pleasant", "nice', "good", etc.

Inspection of the Semantic Differential graph (Table I) reveals a remarkably uniform profile for the Teachers' perceptions of the Self (1) for all teachers, (2) for teachers in the top quartile of the Social Desirability Index, (3) for teachers in the bottom quartile of the Social Desirability Index.

Our general hypothesis--that the Dependent group would see themselves in a more favorable light--turned out to be a valid assumption not for the Dependent group, but for all teachers, regardless of personality characteristic. These teachers see themselves as Fair, Alert, Active, Good, and above all, Clean. This profile is, indeed, almost exactly what we might have predicted for the Dependent teachers.

The Teachers' perception of students of the three different ethnic groups, or of boys by men Teachers, or of girls by women Teachers, did not differ a great deal. (See Table II) There seems to be a tendency to see all of the children--that is, all of the children of whatever ethnic group--as pretty much the same. Most importantly, they seemed to perceive the children as being relatively close to the average. Deviations from the mean, which is 4, of a point or less (that is, of 4 ± 1) are generally seen as not deviating significantly from average. Osgood claims that differences "greater than two units on the average scale by the average subject would be expected to occur less than five percent of the time by chance." (Osgood, p. 132) Nevertheless, the trend was to perceive the children as "Fair", "Alert", "Hot", "Good", "Clean", and "Active".

It will be recalled, however, that the teachers were also asked to rate themselves. The results are two: First, they described themselves as possess-

ing essentially the same qualities they endowed on the children; and, second, they described themselves the same as the children, but only more so. That is, if they saw the children as "Fair", they saw themselves as "Fair" also, but more so; if they saw the children as "Clean", then they saw themselves as even more "Clean." The meaning of this may be related to the psychoanalytic notion of "projection", wherein the individual tends to perceive in the other person the qualities or needs that he perceives in himself. It is often believed that an individual will project only his undesirable needs or impulses, but this is not always the case. At the Conscious level, which is the level where the present study with the Semantic Differential essentially operates, the teachers evidently projected their own needs to be "good".

The Teachers' perception of the children in the same pleasant and desirable image of themselves--but not quite as pleasant and desirable--is consistent with most evaluations of the middle-class ethos, wherein the teacher wants--and needs--the children to become as he (or she) would like to be--again, middle-class. The Teachers five highest peaks on; Fair, Good, Alert, Clean, and Active--almost classically depict the middle-class ethos. (Gillin) It goes without saying, then, that the teachers saw no undesirable qualities in either themselves or in their children, regardless of ethnic background.

There is another viewpoint that can be taken in interpreting the present data, and that is that the Teachers felt more comfortable expressing stronger feelings about themselves than about the children. However, it is not clear why this should be so, since their declaration of their perceptions of the children were in a "desirable" direction. So, once again, that most tenable interpretation is the one above--that they saw the children in their own middle-class image, but as not quite having "reached" the position or goal the Teachers

have at the present time.

In general, both the male and the female Teachers perceived the following tendencies in the children. The Anglo-American children were seen as somewhat more Alert than the other two ethnic groups, while the Negro children were seen as somewhat more Strong than the other two. Both Anglos and Negroes were seen as more Active than the Mexican children.

The female Teachers differed from the male Teachers in only a few instances. Female Teachers saw all three ethnic groups of girls as more Good than the men Teachers saw their boys. While the male Teachers saw the Mexican and the Anglo boys as Clean, the female Teachers saw only the Anglo girls as Clean.

As can be seen on the graph (Table II), the male Teachers' and the female Teachers' Self-Perception graphs have been superimposed on the children's graph of the respective sex. A comparison of the male and female Teachers' graph reveals an almost identical pattern. The evidence for stereotype is very strong. Breakdowns by Total Teachers, by Male and Female, and by Most Outer-Directed vs. Least Outer-Directed Teachers reveal no differences. Such a complete similarity of response patterns leaves a little doubt that a stereotype of Teachers and of middle-class values is extant. These values are then projected to their students. Whatever cultural (i. e., social class) or ethnic values may exist tend to be relatively negated. Certainly, this stereotyping suggests additional training of teachers in the area of ethnic-cultural values.

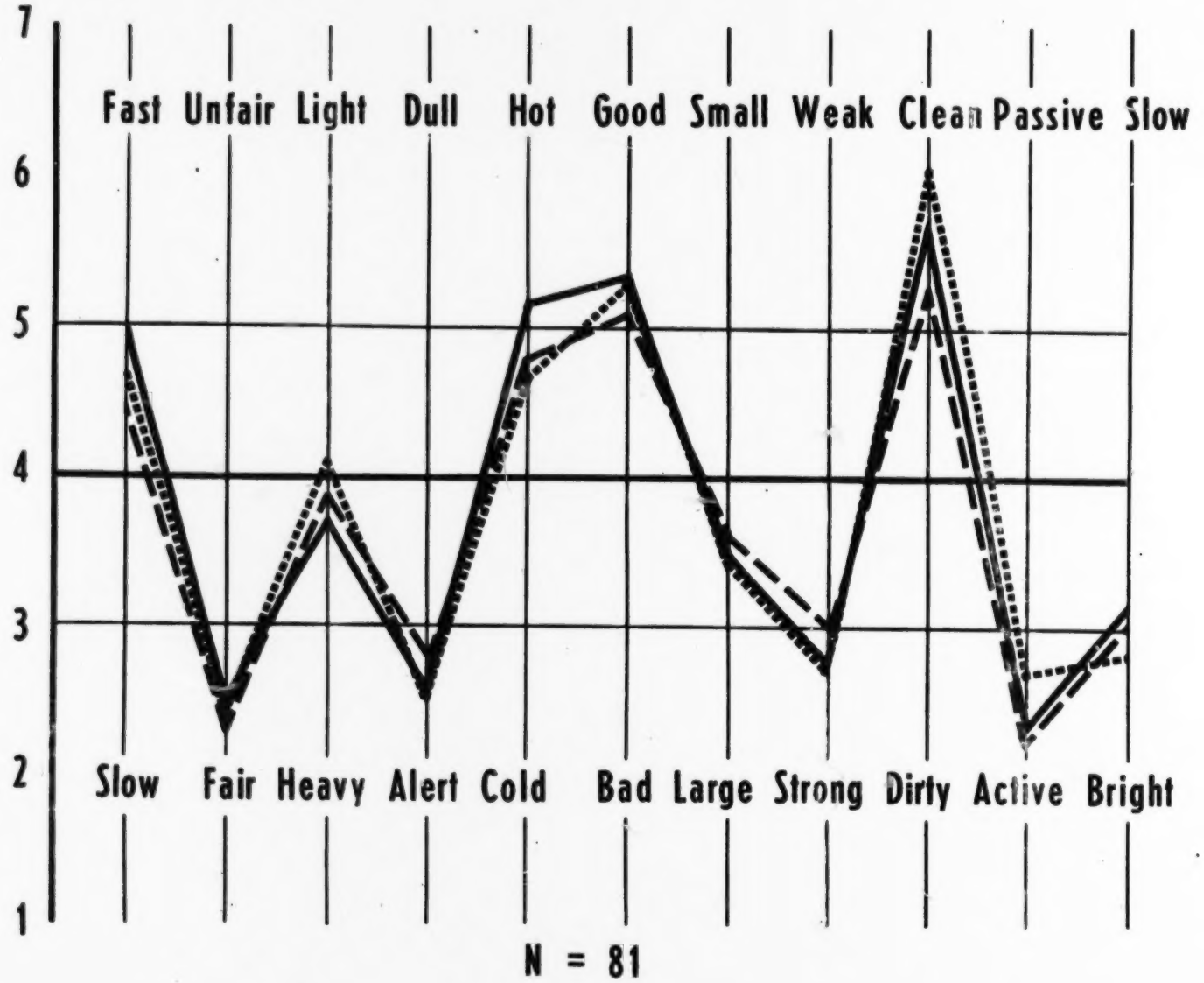
REFERENCES

Gillin, John. National and Regional Cultural Values in the United States. Social Forces, Vol. 34, 1955.

Osgood, C. E., Suci, G. J., & Tannenbaum, P. H. The Measurement of Meaning. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1957.

Table I

Perception of Self by Teachers



N = 81

All Teachers

Top 25% on Social Desirability

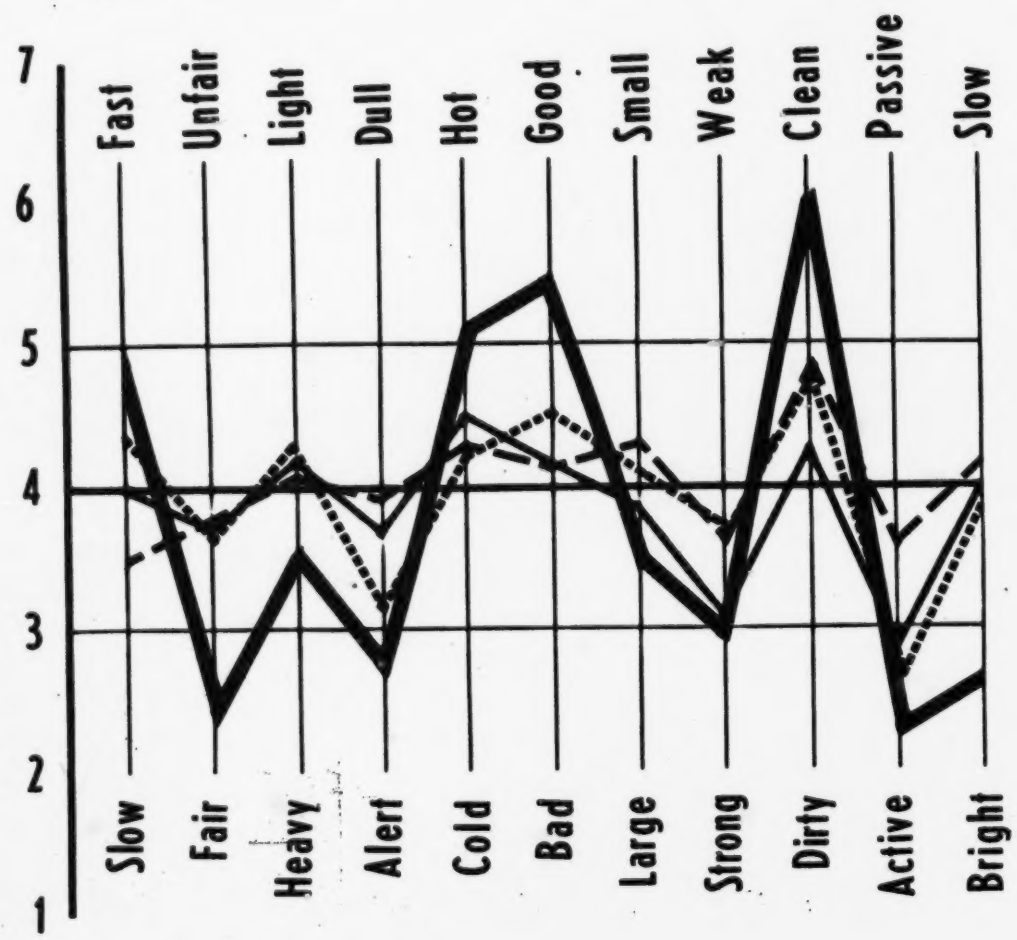
Bottom 25% on Social Desirability

Osgood's Semantic Differential

PERCEPTIONS BY TEACHERS (MALE OR FEMALE) OF THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT ETHNIC BACKGROUND

LEGEND: BOYS

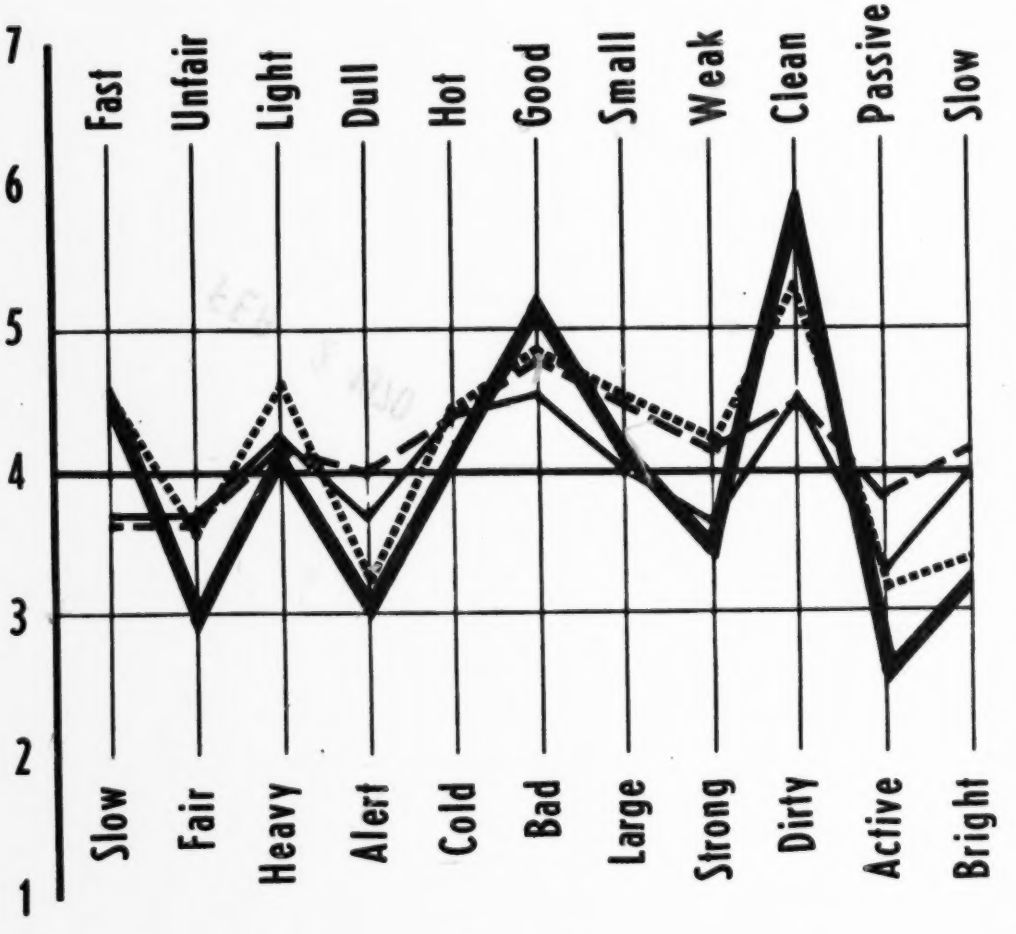
Male Teacher (self perception) ——
Anglo Amer. .....
Mexican Amer. – –
Negro ————



N = 21

LEGEND: GIRLS

Female Teacher (self perception) ——
Anglo Amer. .....
Mexican Amer. – – –
Negro ————



N = 58

Table II

Osgood's Semantic Differential